

Build Together:

Strengthening the Community Housing Sector in Nova Scotia



Community Housing
Transformation Centre
Centre de transformation
du logement communautaire



DRAFT

BUILD TOGETHER: A ROADMAP FOR SUPPORTING THE MOBILIZATION, EMPOWERMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NOVA SCOTIA'S COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR¹

Build Together: Strengthening the Community Housing Sector in Nova Scotia

The *Build Together: Strengthening the Community Housing Sector in Nova Scotia* project took place in 2021 and was comprised of four provincial consultations designed to engage members of the community housing sector, which for the purpose of this project was defined as co-operative and other forms of non-profit housing providers as well as housing groups, networks, and coalitions concerned about housing issues in the province. Participants in the project were asked to identify sector strengths, where capacity needs to be built, who it is helpful to connect with, and what changes would better enable the sector to achieve its goals. People were also asked whether they saw value in working together as a sector and if so, what that could look like. Findings from all four consultations (A, B, C, and D) can be found at <https://coady.stfx.ca/extension/build-together/> as well as seven thematic briefs that were written based on information shared.

Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association

A key element of the *Build Together Roadmap* is the formation of a **Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA)** to support the mobilization, empowerment, and sustainability of Nova Scotia's Community Housing Sector. Throughout the work of *Build Together*, it became evident that the province's co-op housing organizations are well served by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Atlantic Region (CHF-Atlantic) (<https://chfcanada.coop/>). Therefore, the development of a NSNPHA - a non-profit organization governed by a board of directors – is proposed to support, and be comprised of, members who are non-profit housing providers and informal housing groups, networks, coalitions. The NSNPHA will form strategic partnerships at the provincial level to support the work of the sector, and it will convene and support regional housing networks to foster coordination and collaboration throughout the province.

The NSNPHA's responsibilities include:

- Adopting and promoting the values and beliefs² articulated through the *Build Together* project,
- Advancing policy issues, including those illuminated by regional housing networks,
- Advocating for the desired changes³ to the community housing sector documented in the *Build Together* project,
- Collaborating with government,
- Convening regional housing networks, including first voice and underrepresented group advisors,
- Developing and coordinating programs and services to leverage economies of scale in the sector,
- Creating a Management Information System (MIS),
- Developing and implementing a communications strategy,
- Forming strategic provincial partnerships,
- Identifying and communicating funding program information,
- Liaising with other provincial non-profit housing associations nation-wide,

¹ Please note, the *Build Together Model and Roadmap* remain conceptual at this point. Partnership discussions have not been initiated with potential collaborators and partnerships.

² As articulated throughout the *Build Together* project, Nova Scotia's community housing sector believes in diversity, equity, and inclusion, including First Voice, in the community housing sector; equitable access and opportunity for both rural and urban community housing organizations; ending racism and stigma that limits access to appropriate housing; housing as a human right; and providing navigation and support services to people in housing need.

³ Based on 239 responses (online survey, focus group meeting, online engagement sessions, interviews), the following desired changes to Nova Scotia's community housing sector were noted: capacity building - 34%, provincial organization and visibility of the sector - 22%, funding - 17%, inclusion of all races, first voice, and human rights – 16%, and policy development – 11%.

- Providing capacity building opportunities, such as organizational development, within the sector, and
- Reaching out to non-profit housing organizations.

Strengthening Nova Scotia's Community Housing Sector through Collaboration

There is a desire for greater collaboration at the regional level throughout Nova Scotia to reduce competition, increase efficiencies, and leverage relationships to find housing solutions appropriate to the scale and character of the communities served by the community housing sector, including both non-profit and co-op housing providers. Further, there is a growing recognition of the importance of provincial level coordination for a stronger policy voice and engagement with other jurisdictions, and to improve equitable access to resources to ensure no regions are left behind. The *Build Together Model and Roadmap* propose regional and provincial entities that work together to support Nova Scotia's community housing sector.

Non-Profit Housing Organizations

Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA) members are comprised of non-profit housing providers as well as informal housing groups, networks, and coalitions – the latter may have a different kind of membership to reflect their informal status. These non-profit organizations and informal housing groups carry out housing initiatives (research, advocacy, awareness raising, and developing and managing housing).

Regional Housing Networks

Regional Housing Networks (RHN) are groups of organizations that come together in geographic areas across the province to support the creation of housing options for people who are most in need. RHN not only represent geographic areas but also Mi'kmaw and Indigenous and African Nova Scotians and Persons of African Descent communities and are comprised of numerous and varied stakeholders whose mandates intersect with housing (2SLGBTQQAAP, Persons with Disability, Women, Youth, Persons who were Previously Incarcerated, Seniors, People Living with Mental Illness and / or Addictions, Recent Immigrants, Newcomers or Refugees) as well as first voice, elders, service providers, municipal and provincial government, poverty reduction groups, health promoters, universities and colleges, economic development agencies, funding partners, and of course, informal and formal community housing groups (co-ops and non-profits).

Regions of the province may be grouped as follows (groups will be tweaked based on what makes sense in each geographic region):

1. Mi'kmaw and Indigenous (provincial scope)
2. African Nova Scotians and Persons of African Descent (provincial scope)
3. Cape Breton, Victoria
4. Inverness, Richmond, Antigonish, Guysborough
5. Pictou, Colchester, Cumberland, Hants
6. Yarmouth, Digby, Shelburne
7. Annapolis, Queens, Lunenburg, Kings
8. Halifax Regional Municipality
9. Halifax Regional Municipality
10. Halifax Regional Municipality

Regional Housing Networks are supported by Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA) staff members (complement to be determined by resource availability) who are responsible for:

- Advancing capacity building within the sector (local, regional, provincial),
- Advancing policy issues,
- Contributing to provincial discussions related to the non-profit housing sector,
- Convening county or local non-profit housing organization meetings, as needed,
- Convening cross-regional topical experts, lived experience, and underrepresented group advisory circles,
- Convening RHN meetings (provincial for Mi'kmaw and Indigenous and African Nova Scotians and Persons of African Descent),
- Coordinating and supporting regional advocacy efforts,
- Disseminating funding program information and supporting funding applications, if possible,
- Fostering connections between community housing organizations and RHN,
- Networking with local housing organizations to identify successes, where support is needed, and opportunities for collaboration,
- Supporting research projects and initiatives,
- Working with communities to raise awareness about housing issues in the region, and
- Working with Municipalities, the Province of NS, and Planning Commissions to determine land availability for non-profit housing projects.

The functions of Regional Housing Networks include:

- Contributing data, input, feedback (housing issues, successes, policy suggestions) to the NSNPHA to create a provincial profile and awareness of non-profit housing in Nova Scotia,
- Developing regional partnerships,
- Leveraging resources and supports,
- Raising awareness about regional housing issues, challenges, opportunities, and solutions, and
- Sharing information about local housing issues and activities.

Regional Housing Network Members:

- First Voice (people in housing need)
- Elders
- Community (co-op and other non-profit), including Mi'kmaw and Indigenous, African Nova Scotians and Persons of African Descent, Housing Groups (formal and informal)
- Underrepresented Groups (2SLGBTQQAAP, Persons with Disability, Women, Youth, Persons who were Previously Incarcerated, Seniors, People Living with Mental Illness and / or Addictions, Recent Immigrants, Newcomers or Refugees)
- Municipal and Provincial Government
- Services Providers, e.g., Wrap Around and Navigation Services
- Health Promoters
- Poverty Reduction Groups
- Universities and Colleges
- Funding Partners
- Economic Development Agencies, e.g., Regional Enterprise Networks

Strategic Provincial Partnerships

A key element to this roadmap is the formation of **Strategic Provincial Partnerships** to support the work of the affordable housing sector in Nova Scotia. Potential Strategic Provincial Partnerships will be explored more fully, but they are key stakeholders that have been identified as being assets to the community housing sector.

The purpose of forming these partnerships is to support the:

- Delivery of shared programs and services,
- Provision of organizational and technical expertise,
- Collaborative approach to finding housing solutions,
- Advancement of sectoral research, funding, capacity building, wrap around and navigation services, and
- Acquisition of land for non-profit housing development.

Proposed Members of Provincial Strategic Housing Partnership:

- Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Atlantic Region
- Mi'kmaw and Indigenous, African Nova Scotians and Persons of African Descent, 2SLGBTQQAAP, Persons with Disability, Women, Youth, Persons who were Previously Incarcerated, Seniors, People Living with Mental Illness and / or Addictions, Recent Immigrants, Newcomers or Refugee communities or groups
- Nova Scotia Health – Public Health and Mental Health and Addictions Health Promoters
- Universities and Colleges
- Government departments, non-profit service providers, coalitions
- Municipalities (economic development agencies, RENs)
- Funding partners (CMHC, Housing NS, The Centre, foundations, charities, private sector, other government departments)

Resourcing the Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association

Strengthening Nova Scotia's community housing sector through collaboration, the basis of the *Build Together Roadmap*, will be heavily reliant upon the formation of a Non-Profit Housing Association comprised of Regional Housing Networks and Strategic Provincial Partnerships not only to engage a critical mass of non-profit housing organizations contributing to housing solutions, but also to leverage support for the Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association (NSNPHA). Collaborating with CHF Canada – Atlantic Region and using a collective impact model⁴ will make it possible to achieve more together than apart. Hopefully, it will also optimize the benefit that can be realized from available resources. Adopting the *Build Together Model and Roadmap* will require significant funding from the Province of Nova Scotia as well as from other funding partners – the Community Housing

⁴ To learn more about a collective impact model, please visit <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact> or https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact#

Transformation Centre has been supportive of the *Build Together: Strengthening the Community Housing Sector in Nova Scotia* initiative and has indicated it will consider providing additional support. The level of funding required from start-up to full operations may vary, and as the sector evolves and grows so too will the role of a NSNPHA. If support for creating a NSNPHA is affirmed, the next step in this process will be to secure funding.

To provide feedback on the **DRAFT** *Build Together Model and Roadmap*, please contact:

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